

# BTMM 411 – COMMUNICATION RESEARCH METHODS

## Fall 2006

Mondays 5:10-8:30pm TUC 415  
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Office hours: MonWed 12-2pm, and by appt.  
Course website: <http://astro.temple.edu/~zpapacha/btmm411/btmm411.html>

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to introduce you to communication research methodologies. We begin by addressing the theory and research fundamentals of the communication field, then address research principles and procedures, and cover both qualitative and quantitative methods of research used in mass communication and related areas. In this class, you will learn how to conceptualize, plan and execute a research study. At the end of the class, you will be able to better understand and critique research, but also to conduct your own research.

### WHY STUDY RESEARCH METHODS?

Because it is a required course, and there is a very good reason why it is. You will be required to tap into the information we cover in this class over and over again during your years of study here, and most likely, in your future place of employment.

Because even if you never expect to conduct research after you graduate, you need to be able to evaluate research presented to you by others, like co-workers, the media, “experts.” This course will make you a more wise and cautious consumer of the media and related research.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To introduce students to social scientific and humanities-based research methods used in communication.
- To allow students to experience the research process by planning, conducting, and writing up a research project on a specific communication phenomenon.
- To improve students' writing skills.
- To help students become critical consumers of communication and other research.

### TEXTS

Babbie, E. (2001). The practice of social research. Washington: Wadsworth.

Rubin, R. B., Rubin, A. M., & Piele, L. J. (2001). Communication research: Strategies and sources. Washington: Wadsworth.

Bourhis, J., Adams, C., Titsworth, S., Harter, L. (2002). Style manual for communication. New York: McGraw-Hill.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

This is a graduate seminar. Class meetings will consist of a small amount of lecture material, presentations, and a lot of discussion. Please come to class having completed all the assigned readings and prepared to talk about them further. We will also read and critique examples of research that have been published, and we will frequently break into groups to discuss projects, problems, questions and other issues regarding your research projects. Your course grade will be based on the following:

### **Assignments**

**Research Project** – to be completed in five parts

1. **Outline:**

In one or more groups, you will formulate a research question, review the relevant theory and research, and outline a written presentation of this information

2. **Literature Review:**

Transform this outline into a full text presentation leading into your research questions

3. **Method:**

Devise and write a description of a research plan to investigate the question, and carry out (at least part of) the plan

4. **Results and Discussion/Conclusion:**

Write a description of the results and conclusions of the study.

5. **Paper Presentations:**

Create a powerpoint and/or multimedia summary of your work and present to the class, during the last two class meetings. Presentations will be followed by question and answer sessions.

As each part of the project is turned in, earlier parts will be revised as necessary during the semester, until the final version is turned in at the end of the semester. Only the final version of the paper and your presentation will be graded. Late submissions throughout the semester are not encouraged and will be penalized.

**40% for final version, 10% for presentation**

### **Four Research Article Reviews**

After each method is introduced in class, you will find an academic article utilizing the method, and write a page long (single-spaced) critique of the article. You should focus mostly on how the authors explicate the concepts in the literature review and critique the methods used.

**10% each**

### **Participation**

This includes class discussions, occasional unannounced quizzes, exercises in class and involvement in group projects (if applicable). Your attendance and participation to class discussions is essential and expected. This is a graduate seminar, meant to inform you on this topic but to also teach you to articulate your own opinions with confidence. All readings should be completed before the assigned date, and you should come to class prepared to talk.

**10%**

## **SPECIAL NEEDS**

It is our desire that all students participate fully in the curriculum of our department. If you have a disability or special condition that compromises your ability to successfully participate in this class, please notify me as soon as possible and make sure you register with the appropriate University office. All efforts will be made to accommodate your needs.

## **HONOR CODE**

All students are expected to read and observe Temple University's Honor Code Policy concerning academic integrity.

## **PLAGIARIZING**

When facts or other material are obtained from an outside source, that source should be cited properly in the text and the bibliography/references section of your work. Plagiarism is defined as taking the words or ideas of another person and presenting them as one's own without proper credit. Plagiarizing is considered cheating, and a student who plagiarizes will receive a zero for that assignment and/or a failing grade for the course. If you are not certain that you are citing materials properly, feel free to double check your citations with me.

## **ACADEMIC RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The university has recently adopted a policy on students and faculty academic rights and responsibilities (policy #03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link: [http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy no=03.70.02](http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy%20no=03.70.02)

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### **Grading scale:**

<b>A</b> = 100-93	<b>A-</b> = 92-90		
<b>B+</b> = 89-87	<b>B</b> = 86-83	<b>B-</b> = 82-80	
<b>C+</b> = 79-77	<b>C</b> = 76-73	<b>C-</b> = 72-70	
<b>D+</b> = 69-67	<b>D</b> = 66-63	<b>D-</b> = 62-60	59 and below = <b>F</b>

Please be advised that Communication Research Methods is a required course for the MA degree, and you must receive a grade of B- or higher in order to be able to apply it towards your degree credits. **Students receiving below a B- will need to repeat the course.** There are no exceptions to this rule. You will have many opportunities to revise your work towards the research project. Keep track of your progress.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Reading assignments should be completed prior to the date for which they are assigned. You should come to class prepared to discuss what you have read. This schedule is tentative – you will be advised of changes. Readings other than those in the required texts will be placed on reserve at Blittman/or outside my office.

Date	Class Topic	Readings	Assignments
<b>Week 1</b> 8/28	Introduction to comm. research <i>No class Sep. 4 – Labor Day</i>		
<b>Week 2</b> 9/11	Scientific Methods Forming Questions	Babbie, Ch. 1, 2 Rubin et al. Ch. 1	
<b>Week 3</b> 9/18	Research Activity	Rubin et al. Ch. 9, 10, 11, 12	
<b>Week 4</b> 9/25	Concept Explication Validity and Reliability Levels of Measurement	Babbie, Ch. 4, 5, 6	Project Version 1 due (Outline)
<b>Week 5</b> 10/2	Literature Reviews Library Research Reading Research Ethics in Research	Rubin et al. Ch. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8  Babbie, Ch. 3, 17, App. A	
<b>Week 6</b> 10/9	Sampling Stats I Sampling Measures of central tendency Measures of dispersion APA basics	Babbie, Ch. 7 On reserve Bourhis et al.	
<b>Week 7</b> 10/16	Qual. AND Quant. Content & Textual Analysis	Babbie, Ch. 11 On reserve	Project version 2 due (Lit. Review/Theory added)
<b>Week 8</b> 10/23	Surveys & Questionnaires	Babbie, Ch. 9	Content or Textual analysis review due
<b>Week 9</b> 10/30	Guide to common statistical symbols Overview of stats tools & techniques Basic Analyses Correlation	On reserve	Survey review due
<b>Week 10</b> 11/6	Experiments	Babbie, Ch. 8	
<b>Week 11</b> 11/13	Stats II Regression The t-test One-way analysis of variance Two-analysis of variance Interpreting a significant F value	On reserve	Experiment review due
<b>Week 12</b> 11/20	Qualitative Research	Babbie, Ch. 10, 13	Project Version 3 due (methods added)
<b>Week 13</b> 11/27	Historical and Legal Research	On reserve	Qualitative, historical, or legal review due
<b>Week 14</b> 12/4	Paper presentations		

**FINAL PAPERS DUE IN CLASS DECEMBER 4**

